



Ahimsā

Newsletter of the Charleston Buddhist Fellowship

March 2007 (2551)

The Deeper Meaning Of Mindfulness

**At the root of the latest Buddhist buzzword
lies a challenging path to enlightenment.**

BY THUBTEN CHÖDRÖN
Reprinted from *Shambhala Sun*

One of the people who visited our Buddhist monastic community, Sravasti Abbey, kindly made signs for the other guests. At the tea counter, she wrote, “Please clean up spills. Thank you for your mindfulness.” A sign on the door said, “Please close the door quietly. Thank you for your mindfulness.” I began to wonder what she meant by *mindfulness*. It seemed it had become another of those Buddhist buzzwords, like *karma*, that many people use but few understand.

Then I read an article in which *mindfulness* was applied to eating an orange — paying attention to its sweetness and texture, the experience of eating it. In a discussion group, I heard the word used to describe the experience of watching one’s grandchild play and appreciating those moments of joy.

While some of these examples are valid and beneficial uses of mindfulness practice, do they lead to enlightenment? Are they examples of mindfulness as understood in traditional Buddhist texts, where mindfulness is an essential component of the path to liberation?

Mindfulness is a comfortable word for Americans; *renunciation* is not. Renunciation conjures images of living in a damp cave and eating bland food, with no companions, iPod, or credit cards. In our consumer culture, renunciation is seen as a path to suffering. As the Buddha

defined it, renunciation is a determination to be free from *dukkha*, the unsatisfactory conditions and suffering of cyclic existence. Renunciation is being determined to give up not happiness, but misery and its causes.

Because our minds are clouded by ignorance, we often don’t have a clear understanding of *dukkha* and its causes. The remedy is to be mindful of how things actually are. In the Vipallāsa Sūtra, the Buddha described four basic ways we misconstrue our experience — known as the four distortions of mind because things are grasped in a way that is opposite to how they actually are.

Holding the Impermanent as Permanent

Although intellectually we may know that our body is aging every moment, our deeper feeling is that this body will last forever and that death won’t really come to us — at least not anytime soon. Similarly, we see our relationships as being fixed, and when dear one die, we are shocked. We wanted to be with them forever and clung to the hope that we would be.

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Activities

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship:

- Conducts informal seminars on Buddhism.
- Prepares and distributes free educational material.

Programs

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship sponsors the following programs:

- Instructions in meditation.
- Dhamma study groups.
- Retreats (at IMC-USA).

There are no fees for any of the activities or programs offered by the organization. Seminars are designed to present basic information about Buddhism to the general public — anyone may attend. However, study groups and meditation instructions are open to members only.

Retreats last ten days and are coordinated through IMC-USA in Westminster, MD (410-346-7889). Fees are set by IMC-USA. Advance registration is required.

One-on-one discussions about one's individual practice or about Buddhism in general are also available upon request. These discussions are accorded confidential treatment. There is no fee for one-on-one discussions. ■

Purpose of the Charleston Buddhist Fellowship

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship is an educational organization whose purpose is to preserve and promote the original teachings of the Buddha in the West.

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship actively encourages an ever-deepening process of commitment among Westerners to live a Buddhist way of life in accordance with the original teachings of the Buddha.

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship provides free educational material to those who want to learn about Buddhism and about how to put the teachings of the Buddha into practice.

The goals of the Charleston Buddhist Fellowship are:

1. To provide systematic instruction in the Dhamma, based primarily on Pali sources.
2. To promote practice of the Dhamma in daily life.
3. To provide guidance on matters relating to the Dhamma, its study, and its practice.
4. To encourage the study of the Pali language and literature.
5. To maintain close contact with individuals and groups interested in promoting and supporting the foregoing goals. ■

Dhamma Study Group

A Dhamma study group focusing on the *Abhidhammattha Sangaha* by Ācariya Anuruddha is meeting Sunday mornings at 11:00 o'clock at the home of Allan Bomhard (940 Rutledge Avenue, Charleston, SC 29403-3206). Call (843) 720-8531 for directions. There is no fee to participate in this group. Those interested in attending this group must be thoroughly familiar with the fundamental teachings of the Buddha from a Theravādin perspective. ■

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We can learn to deal with impermanence gracefully, but this occurs only when we recognize the erroneous perception of permanence and are mindful of the transient nature of people and things.

Trusting That Unsatisfactory Things Bring Happiness

What gives us pleasure also brings us problems: The perfect partner leaves us, our beloved child rebels, the promotion that elevates our status increases the hours we must work. The pleasures of cyclic existence continually let us down, yet we keep coming back for more, thinking that this time lasting happiness will ensue.

Through being mindful of the second distortion, we realize that most of what society has taught us about happiness is simply untrue. We must seek lasting happiness through eliminating the actual causes of misery — afflictive emotions and the actions (*karma*) motivated by them.

Believing the Unattractive to be Attractive

The “body beautiful” is one of our favorite fixations. But if the body is so attractive, why do we go to so much effort to change it? “Staying young” is a major commercial enterprise in this country. But what if we harmonized ourselves with reality? We are aging. Can we learn to be joyful with wrinkled skin, gray hair, lack of sexual interest, and sagging muscles? Aging doesn’t have to be distressing, but our wrong view makes it so.

Grasping at Things That Have No Inherent Self

The most detrimental distorted view sees a self in the body and mind. We think and feel that there is a real “me” here, and that I am the most important “me” in the world. We create an image of a person and then obsess about living in accord

with this fabrication: We pretend to be who we think we are. Yet even at a superficial level, many of our thoughts about ourselves are incorrect: We are not inherently ugly, beautiful, talented, inadequate, lazy, stupid, inept, or any of the other charming or disparaging qualities we attribute to ourselves.

Not only do we believe that there is a real, enduring “me” who is (or should be) in control of our bodies, minds, and lives, we also believe that other people and objects have some findable essence. We trust that things exist in the way they appear to exist. Thus we believe that someone who appears to be an enemy is inherently despicable and dangerous. We fight to protect our possessions as “mine.” Due to the ignorance that imputes a solid and unchanging essence to selfless and changing phenomena, a host of afflictive emotions arise, and we under the sway of craving, fear, hostility, anxiety, resentment, arrogance, and laziness.

By being mindful of the opposites of the four distortions — impermanence, unsatisfactoriness, unattractiveness, and selflessness —, we clearly see the problems the four distortions cause, and a powerful wish to be free from them emerges. This is renunciation.

This kind of mindfulness gives us the courage and ability to oppose our habitual, self-centered ways. Looking around, we see that all other beings are just like us in wanting happiness and wishing to be free of suffering, and thus arises the altruistic intention to work for their benefit. Being mindful of the benefits of cherishing others opens our hearts to genuine love and compassion. Our deep interconnection with others gives rise to the intention to eliminate all obscurations from our minds and to develop our capacities limitlessly so that we can best benefit them. This is how mindfulness leads to liberation. ■

Thubten Chödrön is an American-born Tibetan Buddhist Nun and the Abbess of Sravasti Abbey, a Buddhist monastic community near Spokane, Washington. Her most recent book is Cultivating a Compassionate Heart (Snow Lion, 2006). Reprinted from Shambhala Sun (September 2006).

Cultivating Peace, Dismantling War: Inner and Outer Disarmament

BY REV. HOZAN ALAN SENAUE,
Buddhist Peace Fellowship, February 2005

Berkeley, CA (USA) — Seeds of peace abide within us. They must be carefully tended. This is the Buddha's teaching, resonant with the wisdom of all the great religions. As we begin the year 2005, Buddhist Peace Fellowship is putting forth a theme for our work: "Cultivating Peace, Dismantling War." We are asking our members, friends, and chapters — particularly those of you in the United States — to reflect and act in accord with this theme, to connect our *dharma* practice with the challenge of peacemaking.

The machinery of war lies all around us. Six thousand nuclear warheads rest in America's arsenal, enough weapons to destroy the world many times over. More than \$150 billion in arms trades over the last ten years were brokered by the U.S., half of the world's weapon sales. Millions of landmines lie just beneath the surface of roads, tracks, and fields in Cambodia, Afghanistan, Iraq, Bosnia, and nearly eighty other countries, while our government stockpiles more than ten million mines and reserves the right to deploy them. Government leaders congratulate themselves on a U.S. role as the great voice for peace and democracy, but this is hardly the way others in the world see us.

In the streets of America's cities, anything from "Saturday night specials" to automatic weapons are cheaply obtained and readily used. Urban police are locked into their own spiraling arms race, with automatic weapons and tasers becoming weapons of choice against the poor.

The language and images we encounter on television, in the movies, and on the streets are increasingly violent, sexualized, and coarse.

When fundamentalists and evangelicals raise questions about "values," they have a valid point. We have become a self-centered nation without any true moral authority

As engaged Buddhists in the United States, how do we respond to an epidemic of violence that has deep roots in our own nation, our lives, and our privilege? This is a question that is always before us. BPF's theme "Cultivating Peace, Dismantling War" is a way of talking about national, personal, and inner disarmament. This word "disarmament" carries, for some people, uncomfortable echoes of the Cold War and decades past. But with all kinds of nuclear and conventional weapons more widely available and more deadly than ever, disarmament is precisely what we need: disarmament in conflicts between nations, and inner disarmament within ourselves, in our families, workplaces, and communities. Thoroughgoing disarmament is the way to dismantle war and cultivate peace.

His Holiness the Dalai Lama consistently teaches about "inner disarmament." He explains that "Outer disarmament comes from inner disarmament. The only true guarantee of peace lies within ourselves...you try to reduce negative emotions such as hatred, anger, jealousy, extremism, and greed, and promote compassion, human affection, tolerance..."

Meditation practice is the essence of inner disarmament. In meditation, we become intimate with our disquiet or *dukkha*, our own potential for violence. What the Buddha called *dukkha* is variously translated as "suffering," "dissatisfaction," or "lack" — the seemingly ceaseless flow of anxiety and self-centered thoughts. As meditation deepens, we physically realize the interconnection of all beings, even those whose actions we recoil from. They are essentially not different from ourselves. We all share the same capacity for delusion and enlightenment. The difference is a matter of choice based on compassionate understanding.

Buddhist wisdom explains that we ourselves provide a home and a source for the violence around us. We live according to the laws

❖ Ahimsā, Newsletter of the Charleston Buddhist Fellowship ❖

of *karma*, or intentional action, which simply put means that the choices we make about how to live create the sea of cause and effect in which we swim.

But meditation is not enough. To cultivate peace, we must move from silence into action. Thich Nhat Hanh's expression of the First Precept, or Mindfulness Training, points the way:

Aware of the suffering caused by the destruction of life, I vow to cultivate compassion and learn ways to protect lives of people, animals, plants, and minerals. I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life.

Inner Disarmament and Outer Disarmament are like vines twining together, inseparable. "I am determined not to kill, not to let others kill, and not to condone any killing in the world, in my thinking, and in my way of life." If we really take this sentiment to heart, there is pressing work to be done in the world.

- Stopping the war in Iraq, which is spiraling into ceaseless destruction. Acting with all the nonviolent tools available to us.
- Identifying, lobbying, and demonstrating against arms manufacturers and traders.
- Building public awareness and support for U.S. participation in the dismantling of all nuclear weapons, the end of nuclear weapons research, and cooperation in all international treaties that ban the sale of landmines and other so-called conventional weapons.
- Training ourselves in nonviolence and peaceful methods of conflict resolution and communication. This should be an integral aspect of our practice and part of the school curriculum at all grade levels.
- Teaching and manifesting religious tolerance and cultural awareness in a world that is ever

more diverse.

- Deepening our understanding of social, economic, and environmental justice so that we are no longer blind to forces that lead us in the United States to live at the expense of millions of other people around the world, people who seek happiness just as we do.
- Helping people take the time to quiet and settle themselves, to slow down so that life can be savored rather than avoided.

This is a short and incomplete list of activities that can move us in the way of "Cultivating Peace, Dismantling War." We offer these suggestions to spur discussion within BPF chapters, at Buddhist practice centers, and among friends. We welcome your responses to these comments, and reports of your activities. We see this new year's theme as one that will express itself with particularity and focus, and as a garden in which each of us can flourish. ■

Hozan Alan Senauke is a Soto Zen priest and teacher in the tradition of Shunryu Suzuki Roshi. He was ordained by Sojun Mel Weitsman in 1989. Alan is presently serving as tanto, or head of practice, at Berkeley Zen Center in California, where he lives with his wife, Laurie, and their two children, Silvie and Alexander. From early 1991 through the end of 2001, Alan was Executive Director of the Buddhist Peace Fellowship. He is presently Senior Advisor at BPF.



Nonviolence from a Buddhist Perspective

BY ALLAN R. BOMHARD

As one matures on the spiritual path, one opens to new perspectives, and the mind becomes more able to see various viewpoints simultaneously. The path that the Buddha taught is a deepening realization. Experiential apprehension of nonviolence replaces mere moral adherence to it. In the depth of realization of personal impermanence, certain truths become self-evident: all things are impermanent; all beings are transient; all beings suffer the common experiences of loss, decay, death; all beings seek happiness. While each living being has its own causes that brought it into existence, all share the common bonds of birth and death. Ultimately, nonviolence is a recognition of the simple facts that the quality of our life is the same as the quality of our moment-to-moment thoughts and feelings, and that enmity, hatred, and violence never improve our state of mind. Liberation means nonviolence.

The Buddhist path begins with taking vows not to kill or even harm other living beings, but it culminates in the identification of nonviolence as the essence of what liberates the mind and heart from hatred, fear, and delusion — as the Buddha said:

All fear punishment; all fear death, just as you do. Comparing oneself with others, one should neither kill nor cause to kill.

“He was angry with me, he attacked me, he defeated me, he robbed me” — those who dwell on such thoughts will never be free from hatred. “He was angry with me, he attacked me, he defeated me, he robbed me” — those who do not dwell on such thoughts will surely become free from hatred. For hatred can never put an end to hatred in this world; only love can. This is an ancient and unalterable law. People forget that their lives will end soon. For those who

remember, quarrels quickly come to an end.

Avoid all evil, cultivate the good, purify your mind: this sums up the teaching of the Buddhas.

Let us live in joy, never hating those who hate us. Let us live in freedom, without hatred even among those who hate.

Conquer anger through gentleness, unkindness through kindness, greed through generosity, and falsehood by truth. Be truthful; do not yield to anger. Give freely, even if you only have a little. You will be blessed. Injuring no one, self-controlled, the wise enter a state of peace beyond all sorrow. Those who are vigilant, those who train their minds day and night and strive continually for Nirvana, enter the state of peace beyond all selfish passions.

Use your body for doing good, not for harm. Train it to follow the Dharma. Use your tongue for doing good, not for harm. Train it to speak kindly. Use your mind for doing good, not for harm. Train your mind to love. The wise are disciplined in body, speech, and mind. They are well controlled indeed.

One is not noble who injures living creatures. Those who are noble hurt no one.

Thus, nonviolence is the essence of what the Buddha taught. Nonviolence is liberating because, in each and every moment, it suffuses our minds — in those moments, the mind feels compassion, identification, and empathy with other beings. Initially, the disciple of the Buddha merely obeys the precept of nonviolence. Eventually, however, he or she comes to embody nonviolence as the very expression of his or her being. ■

Public talk given by Allan R. Bomhard at St. Luke’s Chapel at the Medical University of South Carolina as part of the annual St. Luke’s Day Celebration, October 21, 2004.

Plea to Adopt Buddhist Economics

BY P. K. BALACHANDRAN
Hindustan Times, May 20, 2006

Colombo, Śri Lanka — Śri Lanka's Buddhist economists say that the cure for world-wide ills like poverty, inequality, insecurity, and violence lies in abandoning Western economic theories and models and adopting Buddhist economics — economic principles enunciated by Gautama Buddha 2550 years ago.

The Buddha proposed that the pursuit, accumulation and use of wealth be guided not only by self-interest but also by social responsibility and compassion for the less fortunate and the less endowed.

If this dictum is followed, the world will not be torn by the horrible conflicts and tensions that it is today. Fantastic strides in technology, mass production of an array of goods, and faster communications have not made the world a better place to live.

These advances have only increased economic, social, and political disparities; poverty and national and international instability; armed conflicts; terrorism and counter terrorism; and a sense of fear and insecurity.

To fight pervasive fear and insecurity, elaborate and expensive security systems and deterrents are put in place. Defense budgets have soared even in the poorest countries.

It is in the light of these developments that Prof. J. W. Wickramasinghe, of the University of Śri Jayawardenepura in Śri Lanka, has made a strong plea for the adoption of Buddhist economic principles, which stress compassion, altruistic sharing, and a social, as opposed to a purely individual-driven, approach.

Buddhist economics replaces “self-interest” by “peoples’ interest” as the driving force or rationale of economic activity.

Grim picture

In his work *Buddhist Theory of Development Economics* published by the Buddhist Cultural Centre, Dehiwela, Śri Lanka, in 2002, Wickramasinghe paints a grim picture of the present state of the world.

He then contrasts the prescriptions of the traditional Western economists with those of the Buddha as contained in his numerous Suttas. Quoting the Human Development Report of 1998, he says that 75 per cent of the world's population lives in the developing countries, but they enjoy only 20 per cent of the world's total output.

Fifteen per cent of the world's population, living in the industrialized countries, enjoys 70 per cent of the global income. The infant mortality rate in the developing countries is seven times that in the developed countries.

In 1996, the value of exports of all developing countries amounted to US \$26 billion, which was only 10 per cent of UK's exports. The developing countries had been losing up to \$700 billion in annual export earnings as a result of the trade barriers maintained by the industrialized countries.

“Had the poorest countries been able to maintain their share of the world market at the mid-1980s level, their average per capita incomes would be \$32 a year higher, a significant increase over today's figure of \$228 a year,” Wickramasinghe notes.

“The export earnings of developing countries could rise by \$127 billion a year if developed countries opened their markets to textile and clothing imports.”

“In 1998 alone, the total agricultural support in the industrialized countries amounted to \$353 billion, more than triple the value of official development assistance,” he points out.

Poverty and inequality have only been increasing with economic growth. In other words, economic growth has not led to economic development.

Again quoting the Human Development

Report of 1998, Wickramasinghe says that the ratio of the income of the top 20 per cent to the poorest 20 per cent was 30 to 1 in 1960. But, by 1994, it had gone up to a startling 78 to 1.

In 1982, the developing countries owed \$647.2 billion to the developed countries. But, by 1993, it had jumped to \$1,162 billion.

The Net External Debt, as a percentage of the GDP, had risen from 37.1 per cent in 1982 to 43.6 per cent in 1993.

The total number of people below the poverty line (earning less than \$1 per day) increased from \$1,195 million in 1987 to \$1,300 million in 1993.

In 1993, more than 160 million children in the world were moderately or severely under nourished. Half a million women in the developing countries died each year during child birth.

And to contain the intense competition and tension in the world, created by Western economic theories and policies, countries have been spending enormous amounts on defense.

In 1995, global defense spending stood at \$800 billion, of which the poverty stricken South Asian countries accounted for \$15 billion, says Wickramasinghe.

Disparities in Sri Lanka

Disparities have been increasing in Sri Lanka, an avowedly Buddhist and democratic country.

Using the Consumer Finance and Socio-Economic Survey data, Wickramasinghe points out that while in 1973, the lowest income recipients got 1.8 per cent of the total, it steadily fell to 0.40 per cent in 1985—1986.

On the other hand, the highest income recipients, which got 29.98 per cent in 1973, secured 49.30 per cent in 1985—1986.

Individual orientation at fault

The root cause of all this is the basic precept of Western economic science, which is that the ultimate objective of all economic activity

is maximization of the satisfaction of the individual.

Economists like Adam Smith believed that self-centered pursuit of economic activity would lead to perfect competition, and this would eventually level society.

But this has not happened, says Wickramasinghe.

Change of heart needed

What one sees is the very opposite. The development of capitalism and globalization has only resulted in the widening of disparities. This has been due to the almost complete disregard for social welfare, equality, and the common good.

Modern states have used instruments like taxation, welfare measures, and affirmative action to narrow the disparities. But these have not been very effective, except in a few Scandinavian countries.

What is needed, according to Wickramasinghe, is not only the replacement of the “self-centered” approach by a “people-friendly” approach but a change of heart, that is, change at the individual level.

Individuals have to internalize the “people-friendly” approach. Only then will the new system work smoothly and last long. This calls for a deep study of Buddhism and the adoption of its basic principles.

Buddha’s prescriptions

In contrast to Adam Smith’s contentions, the Buddha says in the “Kosambiya Sutta” that, when a person consumes wealth only by himself without sharing with others, he generates social unrest through jealousy and ill will. Unrest manifests itself in stealing and civil commotion.

While Western economics is based on greed, an insatiable appetite for wealth and generation of wealth, the Buddha’s economics rested on production and acquisition of wealth without a trace of greed.

Greed to him was the root cause of

inequality and subjection, and the consequent unrest, destruction, and radical change.

The Buddha was acutely aware of the power of greed and Wickramasinghe quotes him as saying in the “Rajja Sutta” that “even if the Himalayan mountains are transformed into a mass of gold, it would not be sufficient to satisfy the craving of a human being!”

The Buddha foresaw the consequences of greed-driven economics in the “Chakkavatti Sihananda Sutta”. He decried craving in the “Ratthapala Sutta”.

The Buddha wanted people to produce wealth and consume it in the right way in the “Rasiya Sutta”.

He said that people should ask themselves the following questions: “Was the wealth accumulated in the right, ethical way? Was unfair means used? Whether consumption of it will deprive others of consumption? Whether one is developing a needless attachment to the article of consumption?”

Meaningful charity

Distribution of wealth in the form of donation and other kinds of sharing is the cornerstone of Buddhist economics.

Wickramasinghe quotes the “Samyutta Nikāya, Sedaka Suttas” to say that protection of others is the protection of oneself, since it obviates the need for measures to protect one’s wealth and person.

“Apart from the mental satisfaction one derives from a donation, it reduces the cost of enjoying wealth,” he observes.

The Buddha laid out four principles for the use of wealth:

1. To make one’s mother and father, children and wife, servants and workmen, and friends and comrades happy and cheerful.
2. To make oneself secure from misfortunes.
3. To make offerings to relatives, guests, one’s ancestors, and deities.
4. To give gifts to ascetics and Brahmins.

Middle Path

The Buddha was against both over-indulgence and self-mortification or self-denial.

In the “Nivāpa Sutta” and the “Dhammachakkappavattana Sutta” he criticized over-indulgence because he detested craving. But he decried self-mortification and self-denial also. These were useless he said.

He advocated the Middle Path in personal, social, political, and economic life.

The Buddha said wealth must be pursued and enjoyed without lustful attachment. And it should subject itself to universal compassion.

However, the Buddha was against charity for its own sake. He wanted donations to enable the less privileged to get the wherewithal to make a better living.

The less privileged should be enabled to stand on their own feet and not be abjectly dependent and indolent. He condemned laziness in the “Mala Sutta”.

Misinterpretation of the Buddha

Buddhism is often misinterpreted as a fatalistic religion, in which the pursuit of pleasure (or life itself) is decried as the cause of unhappiness or “*dukkha*”.

Buddhists are expected to cultivate “detachment” and work towards total liberation or “*nibbāna*”.

These dictates are considered to be anti-economic activity or anti-development. But Wickramasinghe considers this view a “sad misunderstanding”.

He says that the Buddha never decried worldly or mundane activities. All he wanted was a combination of economic and spiritual values for the sake of obtaining the maximum, all round benefit for the individual and the society.

This was stated in the “Dvichakku Sutta”. The Buddha was acutely aware of mundane problems. He gave foremost importance to the fighting of hunger.

As stated in the *Dhammapada*, there is no

pain greater than hunger. It is treated as the most serious illness.

The utter practicality of Buddhism is reflected in the fact that its early followers were traders and that it was through trading communities rather than professional missionaries per se, that it spread to all parts of India and South and South East Asia.

The spiritual cum rational character of Buddhism was noticed and appreciated by no less a person than the renowned scientist Albert Einstein.

Writing about his concept of religion of the future, Einstein said:

The religion of the future will be a cosmic religion. It should transcend a personal God and avoid dogmas and theology.

Covering both the natural and the spiritual, it should be based on a religious sense arising from the experience of all things, natural and spiritual, as a meaningful unity. Buddhism answers this description. ■

The Scope of the *Satipaṭṭhāna* Method

BY NYANAPONIKA THERA

This ancient Way of Mindfulness is as practicable today as it was two thousand five hundred years ago. It is as applicable in the West as in the East, in the midst of life's turmoil as well as in the stillness of a monk's cell.

Right Mindfulness (*Sammā-sati*) is, in fact, the indispensable basis of Right Living (*Sammā-ājīva*) and Right Thinking (*Sammā-sankappa*) — everywhere, at any time, for everyone. It has a vital message for all: not only for the confirmed follower of the Buddha and his Doctrine (*Dhamma*), but for all who endeavor to master the mind, which is so hard to control, and who earnestly wish to develop its latent faculties of greater strength and greater happiness.

In the first words of the Discourse [the *Satipaṭṭhāna Sutta*], stating its high purpose, it is said that this method makes “for the overcoming of sorrow and misery, for the destruction of pain and grief”. Is not that just what everyone wishes for? Suffering is the common human experience, and, therefore, a method for radically conquering it is of common human concern. Though the final victory over Suffering (*Dukkha*) may, in individual cases, still be far off, the road to it has

been clearly indicated. And more than that: from the very first stages of that road, the method of Right Mindfulness will show immediate and visible results of its efficacy, by defeating Suffering in many a single battle. Such practical results, in terms of happiness, must be of vital importance to everyone, in addition to the efficient help given to mental development.

The true aim of *Satipaṭṭhāna* is nothing less than final Liberation (*Vimokkha*) from Suffering, which is also the highest goal of the Buddha's teaching — *Nibbāna*. The straight and direct path towards it, as provided by *Satipaṭṭhāna*, and a continuous progress on that path, require, however, sustained meditative effort, applied to a few selected objects of Mindfulness.

But, for striving after that highest goal, a general application of Mindfulness, on the level of the normal life activities, is of no less importance. It will give invaluable support to the effort in specialized and intensified Mindfulness. It will further instill, in minds still untrained, the general “mood” and attitude of Mindfulness and give familiarity with its “mental climate”. Its beneficial results, in a narrower and “worldly” field, will be an additional inducement to extend the range of application and will be an encouragement to take up the systematic practice aiming at the highest goal. For these reasons, special attention must be given as part of one's daily spiritual practice to the general aspects of

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Mindfulness, i.e., its place in the fabric of human life in general.

In *Satipaṭṭhāna* lives the creative power as well as the timeless and universal appeal of a true doctrine of Enlightenment (*Bodhi*). It has the depth and the breadth, the simplicity and the profundity for providing the foundation and the framework of a living *Dhamma* for all, or, at least, for that vast, and still growing, section of humanity that is no longer susceptible to religious or pseudoreligious sedatives, and yet feel, in their

lives and minds, the urgency of fundamental problems of a non-material kind calling for solution that neither science nor religions such as Christianity, Judaism, and Islam can give. For the purpose of such a *Satipaṭṭhāna Dhamma* for all, it is essential to work out, in detail, the applications of this method to modern problems and conditions. ■

Adapted from the Introduction to *The Heart of Buddhist Meditation* by Nyanaponika Thera (York Beach, ME: Samuel Weiser, Inc. [1965]).





CHARLESTON BUDDHIST FELLOWSHIP
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Charleston Buddhist Fellowship

Membership

The Charleston Buddhist Fellowship encourages sincere practitioners to become members and to become active in promoting and supporting the activities of the organization.

Members receive mailings and are given priority and discounts at teachings and events. Membership contributions help support the on-going activities of the organization and help cover operating expenses such as producing, printing, and mailing notices of events and special activities, mailbox fees, cost of preparing and producing teaching material, etc.

The membership fee is \$10.00 per person per month, if paid monthly, or \$100.00 per person per year, if paid annually. Checks should be made payable to "Allan R. Bomhard."

Membership Form:

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

Home phone: _____ E-mail: _____

Return forms to: Charleston Buddhist Fellowship ♦ 940 Rutledge Avenue ♦ Charleston, SC 29403-3206